DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 119 030 CG 008 398

AUTHOR Maroldo, Georgette K.
TITLE The Way of the Dinosaur: Will School Psychologists Become Extinct?
PUB DATE [72]
NOTE 11p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS Consultants; Elementary Secondary Education; *Prevention; *Professional Services; *Psychoeducational Processes; Pupil Personnel Services; *Role Perception; *School Psychologists; School Services

ABSTRACT

The school psychologist is being replaced by regular and special educators properly trained and concerned with assessment for instruction. To survive, he must become a Helping Psychologist--helping others in preparing children, emotionally as well as academically, for the future. Throughout, prevention rather than remediation is stressed. His tasks include: (1) teaching psychology in elementary and secondary schools, keyed to grade level; (2) modified inservice training, imparting understanding of human behavior and applications; (3) community informational services, disseminating knowledge of pertinent psychological processes throughout sociosphere of child, teacher, parent, and community; and (4) focal research and development, involving investigating of theory and technological applications to the educational process. (Author)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED119030

The Way of the Dinosaur: Will School Psychologists Become Extinct?

Georgette K. Maroldo

Texas Lutheran College

Nowadays school psychologists in their erstwhile entrenched positions are under determined attack. Both besieged and unsophisticated, they, "still married to a mental age and an intelligence quotient, instead of to qualitative diagnostic blueprints of child capacities, produce sterile information which assists no one, teachers or child or parent." (Cruickshank, 1972) Moreover, they seem to suffer from a malady which Forness labels "paralysis of the analysis." (1970) Predicting what might happen to the school psychologist, Bardon says, "In the long run, he may very well lose his identity as his former assignments are taken over by others, legislated out of existence, or made obsolete by new educational approaches." (1972) Others claim that he cannot function in his essential role of child advocate and change agent in present and emerging school systems. (Silberberg & Silberberg, 1971) This seems to uncover a fundamental question: Does the impasse lie in the present training and orientation of the school psychologist or in the situation wherein he is required to work? Whatever the penultimate answer, the school psychologist must withstand substantive criticism and adapt to intrinsic and extrinsic changes affecting his professional viability, lest he go the way of the dinosaur.

The purpose of this paper is to suggest tentatively areas in which the school psychologist must be trained or redirected and motivated to assume new and additional roles in cooperation with regular and special educators,

CG 008 398

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

in the hope that what he has to offer all children, teachers, and parents will not be lost. There are functions he must relinquish and others he must perform.

In real danger of being diagnosed, labeled, and placed out of existence, the school psychologist must learn survival strategies keyed to environmental change. Although he must be trained for his job, he must avoid overspecialization and attending myopia. Too often in the past he has criticized teachers because they would not define problems in his terms; now, apparently, positions are reversed. Initially, the school psychologist must review pertinent advances in his own field and study the activities of regular and special educators, who are meeting their own challenges and who, incidentally, often perform with remarkable success many of his former functions. More and more, their training and achievement are principally in the "most directly and educationally relevant" area of pupil assessment for instruction, which in the past "has been largely ignored by the school psychologist" (Hammill & Bartel, 1971) and wherein he has usually failed.

Assessment for Instruction

Recently, the Texas Education Agency (1972) has outlined fourteen clusters of competencies for the generic special educator in the major task areas of diagnosis, prescription, instructional intervention, and evaluation. The chief aim here is that the special educator be competent to identify and remediate deficiencies in the reception of sensory information, central processing functions, adaptive behavior, and psycho-motor functions. Consistent with this, the generic special educator is primarily concerned with outcomes and optimum results rather than with etiology and categorization. In a real sense,

the effective special educator treats each pupil as an individual, a unique person with his own constellations of deficits and abilities.

These competencies, as stipulated by TEA and elsewhere, were formerly within the purview of the school psychologist; however, he rarely addressed himself specifically to the application and necessary accommodation of these and similar competencies in the actual process of classroom teaching. Usually, the school psychologist appeared on the scene in the beginning, made his pronouncements generally based on formal testing in a scheduled time bloc in the school year, and left future developments to regular and special teachers. Rarely, again, did he--whatever the reason--evaluate what contributions, if any, he had made to the process. If he heard that things were not going well, too often he employed familiar defense mechanisms: it's the teacher's attitude, or incompetence, or lack of training in psychology, which precipitated failure in individual and collective cases.

The Informal Approach

In shaping strategies to help pupils with individual problems, the trend today is to employ informal rather than formal approaches. To understand as fully as possible the whole child, his situation in the classroom, and his special needs, the first step is to identify the problem. And this can be done informally by the regular or special teacher, who frequently does this job well--a fact not always recognized by the school psychologist. (Abidin, 1971) Moreover, regular and special teachers are now being trained specifically for this and allied functions. (Adelman, 1971b) Such informal procedures include precise observations and the measurement of behavior (Hall, 1971),

prescriptions for learning (Valett, 1970), writing instructional objectives (Popham & Baker, 1971; Wheeler, 1971), and individualized instruction (Peter, 1972). Another informal approach focuses on task analysis. (Johnson, 1971) As reliance on such procedures spreads, the school psychologist need not administer his full battery of tests, which are of questionable validity and reliability, and which, most often, test product rather than process (Newland, 1971)

Formal Approaches in a New Key

There are times when informal and formal testing must be done in conjunction. Here, again, the special educator accepts a role formerly belonging to the school psychologist. Klinger reports, "National trends in the education of the handicapped or exceptional children present unique demands and opportunities for school psychologists which probably will not be dealt with via traditional methods." (1971) The traditional methods have been almost exclusively formal testing, followed by diagnosis, labeling, and placement. In Texas today, formal testing and related activities are being performed more and more by the educational diagnostician, who subsequently confers with regular teachers regarding materials and techniques, implements educational programs, and demonstrates teaching materials. The educational diagnostician is principally concerned with assessment for instruction, and with helping the teacher to meet the special needs of individual pupils, for example, through behavior modification techniques (Hall, 1971), clinical teaching (Dunn, 1971), engineering classrooms (Hewett, 1971), sequential and hierarchical techniques (Adelman, 1971a & b), and home and school programs (Tyler & Larsen, ca. 1971).

Graduate Training and Relevancy

That, having passed through a mishmash of education and psychology courses, the school psychologist is improperly trained to meet the needs of child, teacher, and parent has been maintained with varying emphasis by many critics, including Giebink and Ringness (1970) and Barclay (1971). That regular and special educators will continue to learn key concepts of pertinent education and psychology, in increasing numbers, in graduate schools to expand their assumption of the roles of the school psychologist is forecast by Adelman (1972a) and others detecting trends. Hopefully, such regular and special educators will be more appropriately trained than their predecessors, especially, as mentioned above, in the crucial area of assessment for instruction.

Change and Survival

For the school psychologist, it is now simply a matter of survival linked to his ability to change and to contribute something worthwhile to a process that has literally outdistanced him. First, he must be redefined--and perhaps redesignated; and, second, he must be given a new set of tasks to perform within the sociosphere of child, teacher, parent, community. In the prefigurative culture envisioned by Margaret Mead, he must look to the future in terms of the present and emergent needs of children, and not to the present as a mere accumulation of past solutions to persistent, recurring problems. The school psychologist must join the vanguard of educators seeking "prefigurative ways of teaching and learning that will keep the future open . . . , [who] must create new models for adults who can teach their children not

what to learn, but how to learn and not what they should be committed to, but the value of commitment." (1970) By extension, the school psychologist should not dictate modes of adjustment to sets of circumstances presumed to be constant, yet destined by their very nature to break down; but he should emphasize the value of adjustment itself in all likely situations.

It is proposed that the school psychologist become a Helping Psychologist--helping others and being helped (feedback) in the complex process of preparing children emotionally as well as academically for the future. He will work in four principal areas: 1. Teaching; 2. Modified In-Service Training; 3. Community Informational Services; and 4. Focal Research and Development.

The Helping Psychologist

The following are tentative descriptions of the four principal task areas of the Helping Psychologist. He may elect to operate in one or more of these areas as he grows through training and experience. While it is probable that many present school psychologists will be able to assume new roles and functions with minimum retraining and reorientation, there is throughout the process a subsistent need for curricular changes in the graduate schools preparing Helping Psychologists.

1. Teaching

As a teacher of psychology, or of psychology in interdisciplinary contexts, in elementary and secondary schools, the Helping Psychologist takes as his subject human relationships--parents, siblings, relatives, peers, others; adjustment to life--family, neighborhood, school, work, and leisure; and individual differences. The Helping Psychologist will gauge his materials

and methods of teaching to the level of his pupil, from the first grade to the twelfth. As appropriate, he might employ simulations, role-playing, models, modules, tape cassettes and multimedia. Moreover, the Helping Psychologist may choose to function in colleges and graduate schools, where his "more dynamic contributions," according to Klinger, "may best be felt at decision-making levels regarding the training of classroom teachers and other professionals who lack a behavioral science orientation and expertise in evaluative procedures." (1972) If we are concerned in our society with physical well-being, and accordingly teach physical education to everyone from first grade through college, should we not be equally concerned about mental well-being, and accordingly teach psychological education on the same basis? Here, too, prevention is more important than remediation: we should not wait until an individual fails to adjust before giving him our attention and help.

2. Modified In-Service Training

In-Service Training must be modified and expanded in keeping with this new concept of the Helping Psychologist and his changed role. Once again, he is primarily a teacher; his principal purpose is to impart to educators and others involved in the welfare of children an understanding of human behavior--their own and that of their pupils and associates.

3. Community Informational Services

While based in the school in the manner indicated above, the Helping Psychologist must expand his functions into the community--the sociosphere encompassing child, teacher, parent, and others with a stake in the educational process. His chief responsibility would be to disseminate knowledge

concerning child development, personality, human relationships, social change, individual differences, and other topics to the extent appropriate. Hopefully, child guidance clinics would be incorporated in this larger context--that of the "community psycho-educational clinics," as termed by Silberberg and Silberberg. (1971)

4. Focal Research and Development

The Helping Psychologist as newly conceived may well concentrate on pertinent research and development, thereby growing along lines dictated by his special interests and talents. One area of investigation with focal implications is that of Theory of Instruction, which, according to Atkinson, "denotes a body of theory concerned with optimizing the learning process; . . . [its] goal is to prescribe the most effective methods for acquiring new information, whether in the form of higher order concepts or rote facts." (1972) At the other end of the spectrum, the Helping Psychologist may elect to work out solutions to focal questions involving technological advances and application to the educational process. And, as London says, "New equipment brings new responsibilities for use and a new social readiness to use it, and the speed with which it gets advertized and talked about pushes advances in practice that no theory is likely to keep up with." (1972)

So, it appears that the school psychologist will not become extinct if he can change in response to the prefigurative needs of the sociosphere of child, teacher, parent, and community. He may, however, undergo a difficult period of readjustment. Hopefully, what has been observed concerning social readiness to accept new equipment will be transferred to the new concept of Helping Psychologist, lest a valuable human resource be lost.

REFERENCES

Abidin, R. R. What's wrong with behavior modification? Journal of School Psychology, 1971, 9, 38-42.

Adelman, H. S. Learning problems: Part I, An interactional view of causality. Academic Therapy, 1970-71, 6, 117-128. (a)

Adelman, H. S. Learning problems: Part II, A sequential and hierarchical approach to identification and correction. Academic Therapy, 1971, 6, 287-292. (b)

Adelman, H. S. Teacher education and youngsters with learning problems, Part I. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 1972, 5, 468-480. (a)

Adelman, H. S. Teacher education and youngsters with learning problems, Part II. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 1972, 5, 538-544. (b)

Atkinson, R. C. Ingredients for a theory of instruction. American Psychologist, 1972, 27, 921-931.

Bardon, J. I. Overview of issue--implications for future trends in school psychology. Journal of School Psychology, 1972, 10, 207-211.

Barclay, J. R. Descriptive, theoretical, and behavioral characteristics of subdoctoral school psychologists. American Psychologist, 1971, 26, 257-280.

Cruickshank, W. M. Some issues facing the field of learning disability. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 1972, 5, 380-388.

Dunn, L. M. Special education for the mildly retarded--is much of it justified? In D. D. Hammill & N. R. Bartel (Eds.), Educational perspectives in learning disabilities. New York: John Wiley, 1971. Pp. 231-250.

Forness, S. R. Educational prescriptions for the school psychologist. Journal of School Psychology, 1970, 8, 96-98.

Glebink, J. W. & Ringness, T. A. On the relevancy of training in school psychology. Journal of School Psychology, 1970, 8, 43-47.

Hall, R. V. Managing behavior: Behavior modification: 1. The Measurement of behavior; 2. Basic principles; and 3. Applications in school and home. Lawrence, Ks.: H & H Enterprises, 1971.

Hammill, D. D. & Bartel, N. R. (Eds.) Educational perspectives in learning disabilities. New York: John Wiley, 1971.

Hewett, F. M. A hierarchy of educational tasks for children. In D. D. Hammill & N. R. Bartel (Eds.), Educational perspectives in learning disabilities. New York: John Wiley, 1971. Pp. 353-365.

Johnson, D. J. Educational principles for children with learning disabilities. In D. D. Hammill & N. R. Bartel (Eds.), Educational perspectives in learning disabilities. New York: John Wiley, 1971. Pp. 133-143.

Klinger, R. L. A shift of emphasis in Texas education. Journal of School Psychology, 1972, 10, 153-156.

London, P. The end of ideology in behavior modification. American Psychologist, 1972, 27, 913-920.

Mead, M. Culture and commitment: A study of the generation gap. Garden City, N.Y.: Natural History Press/Doubleday, 1970.

Newland, T. E. Psychological assessment of exceptional children and youth. In W. M. Cruickshank (Ed.), Psychology of exceptional children and youth. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971. Pp. 115-172.

Peter, L. J. Individual instruction. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972.

Popham, W. J. & Baker, E. L. Systematic instruction. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970.

Texas Education Agency (TEA). Competencies of the generic special educators. Mimeographed; Austin, Tx.: Texas Education Agency, 1972.

Tyler, J. L. & Larsen, S. C. Home-school communication program: A boon for teachers. Unpublished typescript; Austin, Tx: Dept. of Special Education, University of Texas, ca. 1971.

Silberberg, N. E. & Silberberg, M. C. Should schools have psychologists? Journal of School Psychology, 1971, 9, 321-328.

Valott, R. Prescriptions for learning. Palo Alto, Calif.: Fearon, 1970.